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SUBJECT: MOROCCO: 2009 ANNUAL TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

REF: A. 08 STATE 127448
[1](#)B. 08 CASABLANCA 0255
[1](#)C. RABAT 0090

[1](#)1. (U) This cable responds to action request (Ref A) for updated information on the Moroccan government's efforts to combat trafficking in persons from April 2008 to February 2009.

OVERVIEW: Plus Ca Change...

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Government of Morocco (GOM) dismantled 220 trafficking networks in 2008. However, it continued to conflate the issue of migrant smuggling and human trafficking. The GOM prioritized law enforcement activities intended to investigate, prosecute and deter trafficking rings. The GOM pressed charges against five true traffickers who had taken women to the Middle East, and it offered consular assistance to the women. In spite of demarches at the ministerial level, the GOM has not yet implemented screening procedures or protections for victims of international trafficking and has taken few steps to prevent its own nationals from becoming victims of international trafficking.

[1](#)3. (SBU) On the domestic front, Morocco continued to wrestle with internal trafficking problems, specifically the widespread issue of child labor, unaccompanied minors trafficked to Europe, and the sexual exploitation of children, particularly in tourist areas. The political will exists at the highest levels of the Moroccan government to solve these problems but prioritizing budgets, reforms, and the implementation of existing laws continue to be a problem. Forty-eight businesses were fined for violating child labor laws.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The GOM treats domestic trafficking issues primarily as a development issue. For example, most anti-child labor programs in Morocco focus on providing financial support and education to the targeted family to ensure that the child stays in school for as long as possible. We note that the GOM has made a concerted effort to respond to USG requests for information on TIP developments, but lacks the bureaucratic infrastructure to report statistics accurately.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Due to its geographic location, Morocco is a source for trafficked people, a destination country, and a place of transit. Morocco faces a number of substantial socio-economic challenges including poverty, high levels of illiteracy, unemployment, and

clandestine migration, all of which contribute to the problem of trafficking. Since 2002 Spain has spent over USD 324 million constructing a mobile command and control system to monitor its maritime border with Morocco. Spain has also greatly increased funding for and cooperation with Moroccan border security forces. Clandestine sub-Saharan migrants, who are especially vulnerable to trafficking, have increasingly taken up residence in Morocco because of the success of the Spanish-Moroccan border security measures.

16. (SBU) PARAGRAPH 23: Morocco's TIP Situation.

-- 23/A. Sources for information on Trafficking in Persons (TIP) includes, the Moroccan Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Ministry of Interior (MOI), in particular the Directorate of Borders and Migration, the Ministry of Social Development, the Family, and Solidarity (MOSD), the Ministry of Employment and Professional Training (MOE), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MFA). In addition, international organizations such as IOM, UNHCR, UNDP, UNIFEM and UNICEF have provided information. International NGOs such as Caritas, Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF), and Christian churches that provide assistance directly to the migrant community are well placed to provide insight into their situation. National NGOs, especially those focusing on women and children, such as Bayti, INSAF, Fondation Occidental Oriental, the Moroccan Association of Women's Rights, the Democratic League Defending Women's Rights, the anti-pedophilia organization Hands Off My Child, and others were able to provide a picture of the situation of exploited women and children.

-- The IOM, with the assistance and funding of UNHCR, UNDP, UNIFEM, and UNHCR has begun the first ever national assessment of

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trafficking in persons issues in Morocco. The report will focus exclusively on victims trafficked across international borders; principally Moroccans trafficked for sexual exploitation or forced labor to Europe and the Middle East and sub-Saharans trafficked through Morocco to Europe. The study, which began in December 2008, will conclude with a report and policy recommendations to the GOM in April 2009. In addition, UNICEF informed post that once IOM's report is concluded, it will begin an assessment of domestic trafficking with the cooperation of the MOSD that will focus on young girls trafficked from rural areas to work as domestic servants in urban areas and those trafficked for sexual exploitation. UNICEF anticipates this second report will be complete by December 2009.

-- 23/B. Morocco is a country of origin and destination for domestic trafficking, generally involving young rural children recruited to work as child maids or laborers in urban centers. Morocco is also a country of transit and destination for internationally trafficked men, women, and children. It is a country of origin for men, women and children trafficked to European countries and the Middle East.

-- The phenomenon of children trafficked to Europe, often with the assistance and encouragement of their families, continued to be a problem. These unaccompanied minors are typically sent by their families with the expectation that at the age of 18 they will be able to normalize their situation and work to support their families in Morocco. In 2007, the GOM and Spain signed an agreement to facilitate the repatriation of the over 6,000 minors living in Spain. A representative of the Moroccan Ministry of Justice reported that she was unaware of any repatriations that have taken place to date. Spain via its international aid agency and Italy via the IOM funded programs in 2008 to assist in the community development of areas that are a source for unaccompanied minors.

-- Both Moroccan boys and girls were at risk of being trafficked internally for labor. Young girls were trafficked from the countryside to work as domestic laborers in larger cities. Boys were farmed out as apprentices in the artisanal sector, construction field or in mechanic shops where they worked carrying supplies and performing menial tasks.

-- Up to date and accurate information on the number of children trafficked for labor is not available. A 2003 study by UNICEF

entitled "Understanding Children's Work" (UCW) estimates that 600,000 children between the ages of 7-14 worked. However, the overwhelming majority of child workers (87 percent) are engaged in rural work for their families and not for wages. A 2001 study by Save the Children estimated that at that time between 66,000 to 88,000 children were employed as child domestics. That represented 2.3 percent to 3 percent of the total child population in the 7-15 age group (total of 2.87 million).

-- A 2001 study undertaken by the Ministry of Labor and the Municipality of Casablanca with the assistance of the United Nations Population Fund estimated that there were more than 22,940 children between the age of 12 and 18 working as domestics in Casablanca alone. Of this number 13,580 were 15 years of younger.

-- Sub-Saharan women, who often began their journeys as voluntary migrants, were forced into prostitution to pay off debts on arrival in Morocco or while still en route to Europe. NGOs and Christian charitable organizations that work with this group have informed post that criminal gangs of Nigerians are responsible for running such trafficking rings to Europe and frequently run brothels in Morocco to exploit the women while in transit. In addition, Moroccan women were lured to Syria, Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf as domestic workers and forced upon arrival to work in bars and brothels. The MOI reported offering consular assistance to women in Lebanon, the UAE, and in Tunisia who were trafficked for prostitution. The Moroccan press recently ran a story of three women who were trafficked into prostitution in the Sultanate of Oman after initially being promised high paying jobs in hotels and tourism. The GOM brought charges against five people, including one Egyptian, and the case is currently ongoing.

-- Neither the GOM nor NGOs could provide accurate statistics on the numbers of children and/or women trafficked for sexual exploitation though all groups acknowledged that the problem existed. A 2008

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study of prostitution in Morocco by the NGO Pan-African Organization Fighting against AIDS (OPALS) found that children under the age of 15 were exploited principally in the following areas and towns: Azrou (Ain Louh), Beni Mellal, and the region of Meknes (El Hajeb). The NGO Touche Pas a Mon Enfant (TPME - Hands Off My Child) which works with victims of pedophilia and child sexual exploitation, especially in Marrakech and Agadir, reported approximately two dozen cases of children exploited in these two cities. TPAME and other NGOs report that sex tourism is a problem especially in popular tourist destinations such as Tangiers, Agadir, Marrakech and El Hajeb. The clients are typically from the Arab Gulf countries and from Europe.

-- While there are no accurate statistics on the numbers of internationally trafficked victims in Morocco, the Directorate of the Border and Migration in the MOI reported that the GOM dismantled 220 trafficking networks in 2008. Moreover, the MOI voluntarily repatriated 250 illegal migrants in 2008 and successfully thwarted the attempted illegal migration of 13,386 people of which 4,651 were Moroccans and 8,735 were non-Moroccans. The Royal Moroccan Navy intercepted 1,469 people on boats attempting illegal crossings in 2008. UNHCR, IOM and NGOs that work with the migrant population estimate there are between ten and twenty thousand sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco at any given time.

-- An IOM team conducting research on international trafficking in Morocco visited the town of Beni Mellal and reported that there were a number of cases of young men trafficked to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to work in the petroleum industry and in hotels. These men reportedly received contracts through a family relation but upon arrival had their travel documents confiscated, were forced to work 14 hour days for little to no pay, charged exorbitant prices for housing and food, and told they had to repay the debt incurred to finance their travel and residency in the UAE. The IOM team also visited Khourigba and reported that young men there were lured to Italy by Moroccan criminal gangs with roots in the town. The young men traveled to Italy on the false pretext of legitimate jobs. Upon arrival, they were informed that the jobs were no longer available and that they would need to sell drugs. The IOM reported that at

least one young man who refused and returned home was allegedly killed by the gang upon his return to Khourigba.

-- 23/C: Women and children trafficked for sexual exploitation both internally and abroad are frequently misled as to the nature of their work. Their travel documents may be confiscated and frequently they are forced to work until they have paid off the 'debt' to cover travel and other alleged costs. Sub-Saharan women and children who illegally migrated to Morocco are also at greater risk for being trafficked and sexually exploited. Child domestics are also at greater risk to end up prostituting themselves.

-- Families are almost always complicit in the trafficking of their children to be domestics servants and apprentices since the family is typically the recipient of the child's wages. Domestic servants are exclusively young girls who start working as young as seven years of age. Reports by UNICEF and another by the Municipality of Casablanca found that these domestic servants or "petites bonnes" work an average of 67 hours per week, are illiterate in over 80 percent of the cases, do not attend school, and receive an average monthly salary of USD 50. Child domestics are especially vulnerable to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse by their employers. Non-governmental organizations such as Bayti, which works with street children, and INSAF, which works with unwed mothers, reported that the overwhelming majority of their beneficiaries are former child domestics who have fled from abusive households.

-- Young boys who work in artisan workshops, construction, garages, and factories face conditions that are often dangerous and hazardous to their health. The 2003 UNICEF UCW report found that over half of all working children faced both serious or very serious work risks and that only three percent faced no risks.

-- 23/D: Children living in remote rural areas, with large impoverished families, and who have parents with little or no formal education are more likely to be targeted by traffickers for work in urban areas. A 2001 study of child maids by the Municipality of Casablanca in Casablanca found that 87 percent were born in rural areas, 83 percent were illiterate, 45 percent were from families of

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8-10 people, and in 70 percent of the cases the child's father was dead. Typically children from northern regions such as Tetouan, Nador, El Hoceima, and Oujda are more likely to be trafficked to Europe. Middle Atlas and High Atlas children supply labor to the artisanal shops in Fes, Meknes, Marrakech, and Casablanca. Sub-Saharan women often are forced to prostitution to support themselves and are particularly vulnerable to robbery, violence, and rape. They are unlikely to report crimes for fear of being deported.

-- 23/E: Traffickers of child labor, known as "simsars" or middlemen, typically visit remote villages in search of destitute families in order to place the children as either domestics or apprentices in urban areas. The middlemen negotiate, for a fee, the salary that the family will be paid for the child's work. Traffickers of illegal migrants and Moroccans abroad are often criminal gangs with international ties. They are often involved in the smuggling of drugs and contraband as well as people. Post has received reports from NGOs of a number of sub-Saharan trafficking rings, in particular Nigerians, who smuggle women into Morocco and on to Europe for sexual exploitation. Post also has received reports of Filipinos trafficked to Morocco to work as domestics though the number is very small.

17. (U) PARAGRAPH 24 A-B: The GOM acknowledges that trafficking is a problem. While the MOJ is designated as the coordinating ministry for trafficking issues, the MOI is the primary ministry dealing with prevention, enforcement, and protection issues. The MOI had primary responsibility for anti-trafficking activities although these involved different entities falling under it: the Directorate of Migration and Border Security dealt with clandestine immigration while prostitution and sexual exploitation fall under the police. Three ministries were chiefly responsible for child labor issues: the Ministry of Employment and Professional Training, which is responsible for enforcing the Labor Code, the Ministry of Social

Development, the Family, and Solidarity, which oversees the National Action Plan for Children, and the Ministry of National Education, specifically its Department of non-Formal Education, which tries to provide remedial education and job training to child workers. Prosecution of individuals charged with trafficking or violations of labor laws fell to the Ministry of Justice.

-- 24/D: The government does not systematically monitor anti-TIP efforts and is unable to provide information on the number of victims trafficked or the prosecution of traffickers. The GOM was able to provide some limited information on the number of smugglings rings intercepted and employers fined for employing underage workers. In 2007 the MOI published a document entitled "National Strategy to Fight Trafficking in Persons" which outlines the GOM's current and planned efforts to combat trafficking through prevention, enforcement, and the protection of victims. However, this document like its 2003 predecessor is largely an overview of the trafficking issue which treats TIP largely as the prevention of clandestine migration.

18. (U) INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKERS:

-- 25. PARAGRAPH A-D: No new legislation regarding trafficking has been enacted since the last TIP report.

-- Please refer to the Post's 2008 TIP report (Ref B) for detailed information on the specific codes and penalties for trafficking and sexual and labor exploitation. The 2003 Immigration Act covers the codes and prescribed punishments for trafficking, the Penal Code for rape, prostitution, and sexual exploitation, and the Labor code for child labor and forced labor.

-- 25/E: According to the MOI, the GOM broke up 220 trafficking/smuggling rings in 2008 and 417 rings in 2007. The GOM did not provide any further specifics on the number of individuals, the laws under which they were prosecuted, and the length of these sentences.

-- For the first time, the GOM reported on fines levied against employers and companies for using child labor. The Ministry of Employment reported that in the first six months of 2008, 55 establishments were visited with 94 observations of child labor. 29 fines and citations were given to businesses employing children

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under the age of 15. During the same time period, 184 establishments were visited and 616 observations and 19 fines were given for the employment of children between 15 and 18 years of age.

No additional information about the amount of the fines was available. The fines and citations given for child work were in the following industries: wood-working industry 23 percent, mechanical 19 percent, and construction industries 12 percent, and other sectors 46 percent. These numbers come from the work of labor inspectors charged with enforcing the labor code. However, the inspectors are limited in number, resources, and investigative power, which affects their ability to fulfill their enforcement function. There are no labor inspectors dedicated solely to child labor issues and the inspectors do not have the authority to inspect private residences for underage domestic servants.

-- As in previous years, the Ministry of Justice was unable to point to any cases of fines or sanctions levied against individuals for the illegal employment of child domestics or the prosecution of middle-men or "simsars" who traffic children from rural to urban areas. The MOJ, however, told Post that it is working on having a better statistical understanding of this issue. It has requested the pertinent authorities to submit statistics to them by April 2009 for the year 2008 on issues pertaining to child sexual exploitation.

-- 25/F: The MOJ reported that judges and public prosecutors receive training specific to TIP issues during their initial training program. In addition, each of the 20 tribunals in Morocco has assigned a women and children's cell which has received specialized training on TIP related issues. The MOI also reported that the territorial police and border security officials have

received training through a TIP module. In addition, UNHCR sponsored a two-week training course in July 2008 for 200 judges and public prosecutors on refugee law which also included a section on trafficking in person.

-- 25/G: The GOM actively cooperates with Spanish authorities to prevent the smuggling of people and goods across the Strait of Gibraltar and to the Canary Islands. However, the GOM could not provide information specific to the prosecution or investigation of instances of trafficking. The GOM has limited relations with Algeria and the land border has been closed since 1997. The overwhelming majority of illegal sub-Saharan migrants enter from Algeria and are likewise expelled back across the border.

-- 25/H: Morocco was party to several bilateral and multilateral conventions on judicial cooperation and extradition of criminals with European, Arab, Asian, and African countries. Morocco has a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) with the United States but it does not include provisions for extradition. Post is not aware of the GOM extraditing any individuals charged with trafficking and in 2008 the GOM did not have any pending or concluded cases of extraditing trafficking offenders to the United States.

-- 25/I: There was no evidence of national government involvement in, or tolerance for, trafficking. On a local level, however, press reports, anecdotal information, and information from local NGOs indicated that corruption is a problem among Morocco's security forces. Trafficking of persons to Europe is integrally connected to the trafficking of migrants, drugs, and other contraband. Although the MOI was not able to provide any information on the investigation or prosecution of officials related to trafficking; the GOM has repeatedly arrested and prosecuted officials with any complicity in drug smuggling. In January 2009, the GOM arrested approximately 102 people for involvement in a criminal gang that allegedly smuggled hashish from Nador to Spain. Of the 102 people arrested in the ongoing case, 29 were from the Royal Navy, 17 from the Royal Gendarmerie, 23 from the Auxiliary Forces, and one from the Armed Forces (Ref C).

-- 25/J: The MOI was unable to provide post with statistics of any GOM officials prosecuted for their involvement in TIP.

-- 25/K: Prostitution is not legal in Morocco. The law is generally enforced.

-- 25/L: Morocco participates in international peacekeeping efforts and is sensitive to the issue of sexual exploitation. The UN

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investigated accusations of sexual abuse against GOM forces participating in a peacekeeping mission in Cote d'Ivoire in 2007 and concluded that there was insufficient evidence to charge any of the personnel. All Moroccan soldiers participating in UN peacekeeping missions receive training on the issue of sexual exploitation.

-- 25/M: Morocco has a problem with sex tourism. European, especially French and Spanish men, as well as Arabs from the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia are the principal countries of origin for sex tourists. We are not aware of Moroccan nationals traveling abroad to engage in sex tourism.

19. (U) PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS:

-- 26/A: The GOM did not provide assistance to foreign victims of trafficking by way of providing temporary or permanent residence status or other relief from deportation.

-- 26/B: Morocco's Center for Migrant Rights provided counseling services, including an explanation of one's legal and civil rights, to Moroccan migrants; however, legal representation was not offered, nor was shelter, medical or psychological services. The GOM relies on the NGO community to provide most services to victims of trafficking. The GOM has established a center in Casablanca and in Marrakech to offer assistance to street children and the victims of violence, abuse, and sexual exploitation. According to an NGO that deals with children's issues, the center in Marrakech is funded

exclusively by the municipality of the city and has limited services and personnel despite commitments from the GOM to staff the center with employees from the MOSD.

-- Foreigners who are victims of trafficking do not have the same access to services that Moroccan victims do. Caritas, Medecins sans Frontieres, and Christian charitable organizations are the only NGOs that provide services to the migrant community and foreign victims of trafficking. Services are limited and may include counseling, legal advice, and medical and financial assistance.

-- 26/E-F: The GOM did not provide assistance to foreign victims of trafficking by way of providing temporary or permanent residency status or other relief from deportation. Post is not aware of any referral process to transfer victims detained or arrested to institutions that provide care.

-- 26/G: The GOM was unable to provide information on the number of victims trafficked. Morocco did not differentiate between victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants. Foreign trafficking victims were treated as illegal migrants. They were often arrested and deported along with other migrants. Morocco routinely rounded up illegal sub-Saharan migrants and left them at the Algerian border, often without food or water. Migrants left at this "no man's land" between the Algerian and Moroccan authorities were particularly susceptible to robbery, violence, and extortion at the hands of criminal gangs that control the smuggling of contraband in the area.

-- The GOM has established a national crises hotline for women and children victims of violence, however, according to women's NGOs, the hotline refers women to NGOs centers that provide legal and psychological services.

-- 26/H: The GOM does not have a formal system to proactively identify victims of trafficking among high-risk persons with whom they come in contact.

-- 26/I: Sub-Saharan victims of trafficking, while they may participate in the judicial proceedings prosecuting traffickers, are usually deported.

-- For domestic victims of trafficking, in 2003 Parliament changed the Penal Code so that runaway child maids may be administratively returned to their families instead of being arrested for vagrancy. If returning them to their parents was not possible or feasible, they would be placed in separate youth centers, not mixed in with juvenile delinquents.

-- 26/J: While victims were not encouraged to file civil suits against traffickers, they often testified on behalf of the GOM when

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it sought to prosecute trafficking cases. Specific numbers of victims who testified were not available.

-- 26/K: The GOM provides training to its consular officials on TIP issues. The GOM did assist trafficking victims, principally women in Gulf and Arab countries, to return to Morocco and provided assistance with travel documents and transport home. The GOM was not able to provide the number of TIP victims that were assisted in 2008.

-- 26/L: Post is not aware of any financial or medical assistance provided to Moroccans who are repatriated as victims of trafficking.

-- 26/M: The IOM and UNHCR are the primary organizations that provide assistance to trafficking victims. UNHCR has a range of health, education, and financial services which are available only to those with recognized refugee claims. IOM is able to provide voluntary repatriation and a reintegration program to migrants seeking to return home. In 2008 the IOM assisted in the voluntary return of 210 migrants from Morocco to their home country and 11 Moroccans from Europe. In addition, IOM in conjunction with the Moroccan, Spanish, and Italian governments has worked to establish

shelters and a system to assist Moroccan minors who have been the victims of trafficking abroad. International NGOs such as Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF), Caritas, and several Christian charitable organizations provided basic medical care and limited financial assistance to clandestine migrants in Casablanca, Rabat, and northern areas such as El Hoceima, Oujda, Nador, and Tangier. These NGOs did not receive funding from the Moroccan government.

10. (U) PREVENTION:

-- 27/A: The government has periodically undertaken awareness-raising campaigns related to the abuse of children, child labor, and sexual exploitation. In 2007 the GOM ran an anti-child labor awareness-raising campaign which included billboards, advertisements on buses and radio spots. The objective was to inform the people of Morocco about the dangers and the legal ramifications of employing child maids.

-- 27/B: The GOM closely monitors and attempts to combat clandestine migration though it does not differentiate between illegal migration and trafficking. The GOM does not have procedures in place to identify or screen for victims of trafficking along its borders.

-- 27/C: The Ministry of Justice has the lead in coordinating GOM policy on trafficking. In practice, the MOI is responsible for preventing and enforcing trafficking related statutes.

-- 27/D: The GOM has produced a document entitled, "The National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking," which was formulated in 2007 by the Ministry of Interior under the supervision of the Directorate of Migration and Border Control along with an inter-ministerial committee of coordination. The plan describes the GOM's strategy in terms of prevention, combating trafficking, and protection. The plan is largely an overview of past democratization and human rights reforms and current efforts to control the borders and stem illegal migration and smuggling. The plan does not address in a concrete fashion current anti-TIP efforts or intended reforms. NGOs were not consulted in its formation. The national strategy cannot be described as a plan of action since it does not lay out specific recommendations or steps for the government to take.

-- In 2006 the GOM launched its 'National Plan of Action for Children,' outlining the government's strategy for 2006-2015 and headed by the king's sister Lalla Meryem. The plan's four goals are to improve children's health and education; protect children from abuse, violence, and exploitation; and combat HIV/AIDs. As part of plan and the GOM's anti-child labor efforts, the Ministry of Employment and Professional Formation led by the Office of the Director of Work, in conjunction with ILO-IPEC and local NGO partners, oversaw a number of programs to deal with the issue of child labor. The Ministry is currently managing four programs to be implemented by local NGOs in the provinces of Kenitra, Taroudant, and two in Marrakech. The programs seek to decrease incidents of child labor through awareness raising, financial assistance to needy

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families, and lowering obstacles to school attendance. The total budget for the four programs is USD 236,000.

-- 27/E: The Ministry of Justice informed post that, in conjunction with the Ministry of Tourism, that an anti-sex tourism plan of action was under discussion. Post is not aware of any new steps taken by the government on this issue.

-- 27/F: We are not aware of any steps taken by the GOM to reduce the participation of Moroccan nationals in international child sex tourism.

-- 27/G: Post reported in 2008 in detail about steps that Morocco has taken to enforce a "zero tolerance" standard for its troops involved in UN peacekeeping missions in 2005 and 2007. (Ref. B) Morocco provides training to all of its UN peacekeepers to sensitize them to the issue of sexual exploitation.

11. (U) Mission POC on TIP issues is Matthew W. Lehrfeld,

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112. (U) Embassy Rabat cleared this message.